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Appropriations Committee

February 25, 2011

Good evening Senator Harp and Representative Walker and members of the appropriations committee. My name is Patricia Wrice—executive director of Operation Fuel. I want to thank you for the support you have given to Operation Fuel.

Through a network of more than 100 fuel banks, Operation Fuel provides emergency energy assistance to the elderly, disabled individuals, and working poor families who are facing a financial crisis and are not eligible for, or have exhausted, government energy assistance benefits.

This year, there has been an even greater need for energy assistance. From December to mid-February, we have approved \$836,075 in grants for 2,721 households. During the last week of January, our fuel

banks processed more applications than they did for the entire month of January 2010. But because of the snowy, frigid winter we've had, people are going to need our help at least through May. Unfortunately we don't have the resources right now. With so many factors that can't be controlled—LIHEAP funding, weather conditions, and the price of fuel, Operation Fuel has exhausted its budget for this winter and was forced to close down early. To prevent this situation next year from occurring, Operation Fuel is requesting \$1.1 million as an allocation for next year's budget. We are requesting \$ 1million for energy assistance that will allow us to provide a grant of \$350 to approximately 2,800 households. The \$100,000 will be used to provide funding for case management services to our local fuel banks. Operation Fuel will set aside \$21 per energy grant to support the costs for the fuel banks to pay for copying, provide counseling to the families and individuals who come for fuel assistance, determine their eligibility for funds, work out payment arrangements with utilities and provide fuel assistance in enrolling clients into matching payment plans run by the utility companies. The remainder of the funding would be used to support the administration and documentation of a household's eligibility to receive an emergency grant. Thank you so much. I will be happy to answer any questions.